

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance

NPG 6 - Open Space & Local Green Space Designations

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 This guidance note provides communities undertaking neighbourhood planning with advice around the approach taken to open spaces in the Local Plan and in particular how to identify, assess, evidence and designate further land as **Local Green Space** in line with the **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF) and the national **Planning Practice Guidance** (PPG) in any neighbourhood plan.
 - 1.2 NNDC have produced a suite of additional guidance aimed at supporting local communities in North Norfolk who are undertaking neighbourhood planning. These are based around specific check sheets and frequent topics that Parish & Town Councils have sought to include in neighbourhood plans. They are designed to provide background information and guidance on how neighbourhood planning groups can reflect local circumstances and develop policies that are justified and evidence in a positive and realistic way which, if followed, will provide more certainty at the examination stage. These guides can be found on the Council's web site: www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplans
 - 1.3 In addition, those producing neighbourhood plans should refer to the national Planning Practice Guidance which provides the government guidance and parameters around planning. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
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2 Background

- 2.1 Planning for Green spaces can achieve economic, social and environmental benefits such as helping in the provision and protection of places of public realm, pitches and sports facilities, footpaths and important routes, natural corridors for wildlife, local amenity and flexible space for communal recreation. Open spaces may also form part of the character and setting of historic buildings and may form part of a necessary flood mitigation or SuDs scheme.
- 2.2 As such green spaces, together with the urban environment contribute to the quality of a place or neighbourhood. Quality of place is a key factor in creating sustainable places and also in attracting investment in jobs and housing.
- 2.3 Good Planning requires that Green Infrastructure be considered in terms of value and benefits it brings to a local community, local environment and local economy.
- 2.4 The adopted Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan contain much of the existing and future policy approach in this area and further background information can be obtained from a number of sources:

Amenity Green Space Review (NNDC, 2018)

- 2.5 As part of the preparation of a new Local Plan for the District the Council has reviewed its policy approach which applies to the provision of new, and protection of existing, green spaces of various types. In the current Core Strategy protection is given to 'Open Land Areas' and 'Education and Recreation Areas' which are formally designated on the Proposal Map via adopted policy CT1 of the Core Strategy 2008.
- 2.6 The Council has published a background paper which forms part of the Council's evidence base to inform plan making for "Open Spaces" of all descriptions. This includes existing designated Open Land Areas, Education & Formal Recreation Areas and potential new Local Green Spaces as part of

the emerging North Norfolk Local Plan. For the purposes of the study these are collectively known as Amenity Green Space.

2.7 The study looked at Amenity Green Spaces with sources of sites drawn from the existing Core Strategy designations, a 'call for sites' process allowing parish and town councils to nominate suggestions, and from officer review in the higher order settlements. The result is a comprehensive assessment of amenity land of one type or another in and around the districts existing selected settlements and in those parishes where town and parish councils choose to put forward suggestions for review.

2.8 The Amenity Green Space Study can be found in the Document Library:
www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/documentlibrary

Emerging Local Plan

2.9 The Council is committed to ensuring that there is a wide range of high quality open spaces across the District and will seek to reduce identified deficiencies and protect and enhance the quality of, and access to, existing open space, whether designated or un-designated. In the 2019 Draft Plan - open spaces we classified as one or more of the following types:

- Open Land Areas - Areas of open land which make an important contribution to the appearance of an area and may provide opportunities for informal recreation. We are proposing that these areas are protected principally as a result of being free of built development and because they make a positive contribution to the character of the wider area.
- Education / Formal Recreation Areas - These are outdoor sports facilities including tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks, school and other institutional playing fields and other outdoor sports areas. These are being protected principally because of their recreational function although many will be open in character.
- Local Green Spaces - These are the spaces which meet the NNDC Local Green Space Assessment Criteria.

2.10 Draft policies in the emerging Local Plan and those currently set out in the adopted Core Strategy along with the policy position set out in the NPPF / PPG provide the policy considerations around any proposals on Open space including those of LGS.

2.11 The Council has also published a background paper around its emerging Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy. In addition, the Council is preparing an additional study in partnership with other local authorities through the Duty to Cooperate. The intended purpose of this study (Recreational impact Avoidance & Mitigation Strategy - RAMS) is to establish a county-wide mitigation strategy to avoid the likely significant effects of residential and tourism development on designated European sites. This could include the identification of opportunities for enhanced Green Infrastructure.

2.12 More information on these can be found at www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/localplan, within the evidence library www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/documentlibrary, and through discussion with officers.

National Datasets

2.13 Natural England host the MagicMaps mapping system which details local nature reserves and other national designations such as SSSI, SPA, SAC and significant information on biodiversity, wildlife and geological interests: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk>

3 What is Local Green Space?

3.1 Local Green Spaces are areas of Open Space where those spaces are demonstrably special to the local community, whether in a village or in a neighbourhood in a town.

3.2 The Planning Practice Guidance advises that:

'Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities'.

PPG Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 37-005-20140306

'Local Green Space designation is for use in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. These plans can identify on a map ('designate') green areas for special protection'.

PPG Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 37-006-20140306

3.3 The NPPF states that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Local Green Space forms part of the network of open spaces and formally designated Local Green Space is afforded a level of 'protection' consistent with 'Green Belt' in national policy.

4 Assessment Criteria for Local Green Spaces in Neighbourhood Plans

4.1 The NPPF sets out the parameters where local communities can use Local Green Space designations and states that Local Green Spaces **should only be designated when a Plan is prepared or reviewed**, and only where they are capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period:

National Planning Policy

The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.

NPPF Para 100

5 Designating Local Green Spaces in Neighbourhood Plans

5.1 The designation of Local Green Spaces must be done in line with criteria set out in the NPPF (above) and demonstrated by providing a **clear rationale** and **robust and proportionate evidence**. Care is required to ensure proper green space provision and that the designation is not misused in order to prevent development or duplicate an existing environmental designation. Neighbourhood plans that seek to designate LGS for the wrong reasons run the risk of policy deletion at examination in accordance with the basic conditions tests.

5.2 The PPG is clear that LGS designations should not be used in a way that undermines the wider aims of plan making or sought to be used to designate large tracks of land, such as those that may form part of a local but wide ranging view.

5.3 The PPG provides additional guidance and states that:

‘Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making’.

Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 37-007-20140306 - Revision date: 06 03 2014

5.4 In identifying evidence in support of any designation neighbourhood planning groups should liaise with the local planning authority who will be able to signpost to existing evidence, help identify existing designations, such as evidence that underpins the Local Plan, technical reports on biodiversity, land scape classifications, existing mapping of designated sites, and local/regional green infrastructure strategies.

5.5 LGS may be designated where those spaces are demonstrably special to the local community where it can be shown to have a particular significance and which are not already covered by any environmental designation such as Sites of Special scientific Interest, SSSI, County Wildlife site, CWS, Open land areas (in the Local Plan), public rights of way, Local nature reserves and historic parks and gardens etc. Different types of designations are intended to achieve different purposes and if such circumstances where land is already protected by a designation, consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.

5.6 Examples of potential sites could include outdoor recreation spaces, parks, public gardens, land where sports pavilions, boating lakes or where structures such as war memorials are located, allotments, or urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis

5.7 Any designation of Local Green Spaces in Neighbourhood Plans must be based on evidence to demonstrate why the area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance. Local significance is generally not considered to be personal opinion but based around beauty, historic significance, recreational value and tranquillity and richness of wildlife.

5.8 In line with the requirements of the NPPF and national planning guidance, any sites that are identified in a Neighbourhood Plan should be assessed against a methodology and this should be explained in the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.9 Further national guidance on Local Green Spaces can be found here: [Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space](#)¹

Local Green Space Assessment Criteria & Proforma (NNDC, 2018)

5.10 For the 2018 Amenity Greenspace Study NNDC used the Local Green Space Assessment criteria in the following table. Neighbourhood planning groups are encouraged to use this (or broadly similar) criteria in order to be consistent with the Council’s approach.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>

Criteria	Explanation of Criteria	Questions to Consider
It will rarely be appropriate to designate spaces that are the subject of a planning permission and or subject to existing designation.	Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the planning permission or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented.	Is the space the subject of a planning permission for development? Is the site already protected by an existing designation?
It will not be appropriate to designate spaces that are allocated or proposed for development in the Local Plan or the emerging Local Plan.	The National Planning Practice Guidance states that: Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the LGS designation should not be used in a way to undermine this aim of plan making.	Is the space allocated or proposed to be allocated in a Local Plan? Has the site been put forward for development in any evidence based documents such as Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment?
The space must not be an extensive tract of land and must be local in character	Blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements is not appropriate.	Does the space or combination of adjoining spaces “feel” local in character and scale, in respect of the local community that the space serves? Is the proposed space larger than other areas of land in the vicinity? Is it contained with clearly defined edges? How does the space connect physically, visually and socially to the local area?
The space must be within close proximity to the community it serves.	The space would normally be within acceptable walking distance of the community it serves.	How close is the space to the community it serves?
The space must be demonstrably special to the local community.	Blanket designation of all/most green areas or open space within an area is not appropriate. The space must be demonstrably special by consideration of the following; The proposed space is of particular local significance and should meet one of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beauty • historic significance • recreational value • tranquillity • richness of wildlife 	